



## **DECR Chairman concelebrates with His Beatitude Metropolitan Jonah at St. Nicholas Cathedral in New York**

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The Divine Liturgy was celebrated at St. Nicholas Cathedral in New York on 6 February 2011. The Primate of the Orthodox Church in America, His Beatitude Jonah, Archbishop of Washington and Metropolitan of All America and Canada officiated in concelebration with Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, chairman of the Moscow Patriarchate's Department for External Church Relations; Archbishop Justinian of Naro-Fominsk, administrator of the Patriarchal parishes in the USA; and Bishop Melchizedek of Pittsburg and Western Pennsylvania, Orthodox Church in America.

Praying were clergymen of the Patriarchal parishes in the USA, the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia and the Orthodox Church in America, as well as faculty and students of St. Vladimir's Orthodox Theological Seminary, representatives of the Georgian diaspora and many parishioners.

The Choirs of St. Nicholas Cathedral and St. Vladimir's Seminary sang at the divine service.

*Many Years* was proclaimed to His Beatitude Metropolitan Jonah, Metropolitan Hilarion, and Archbishop Justinian who celebrated his 50<sup>th</sup> birthday.

After the Liturgy, Archbishop Justinian of Naro-Fominsk greeted the high guests: the Primate of the Orthodox Church in America and Metropolitan Hilarion. He expressed his profound gratitude and love to the senior hierarchs, adding that as a newcomer on the American continent he feels as if he is passing an exam in hope that he would be received with kindness and love.

Archbishop Justinian emphasized that within these walls one keenly feels the link of times and a blessed link with those who built the Cathedral, including St. Tikhon, Patriarch of All Russia who was the head of the Russian Orthodox diocese in North America in 1898-1907, and his associates, the holy martyrs protopresbyter Alexander Khotovitsky and archpriest Ioann Kochurov.

His Beatitude Metropolitan Jonah of All America and Canada said that the Orthodox Church in America has come into being through the labours of the Russian missionaries who had brought the holy gift of the Orthodox faith to the American land. He reminded the worshippers of the deeds of St. Tikhon, and monks and priests from Russia who devoted their lives to the preaching and strengthening of the

Orthodox faith on the continent.

His Beatitude Metropolitan Jonah greeted Metropolitan Hilarion as representative of His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia.

Metropolitan Hilarion addressed the worshippers, saying: “First of all, I bring you greetings from His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia with whose blessing I have arrived here. When His Holiness was metropolitan and chairman of the Moscow Patriarchate’s Department for External Church Relations, he often visited the historical St. Nicholas Cathedral and took an active part in its restoration. The Cathedral and the parishioners are dear to His Holiness, and he asked me to convey his love and blessings to you.

On behalf of His Holiness Patriarch Kirill, the DECR chairman congratulated Archbishop Justinian of Naro-Fominsk, administrator of the Patriarchal parishes in the USA, with his 50<sup>th</sup> birthday and said: “The Lord vouchsafed you to serve many years as a bishop in Transdnistria, and now, with the blessing of His Holiness the Patriarch and the Holy Synod, you serve on the American continent, carrying on the work of St. Tikhon, who served here for a long time. Dear Vladyka, I wish you to be successful in your ministry, to grow fond of this country and its people, and to, as a good shepherd, to know your own sheep that will listen to your voice.” (cf. Jn 10:14-16).

Metropolitan Hilarion presented Archbishop Justinian with a *panagia* with inscribed greetings and donated an icon of St. Nicholas, Archbishop of Myra in Lycea, to the Cathedral, as a remembrance of common prayers at the Divine Liturgy.

That same day, a reception in honour of Archbishop Justinian was given at the General Consulate of the Russian Federation in New York. During exchange of greetings, Metropolitan Hilarion underscored a special role played by St. Nicholas Cathedral in consolidation of the Russian-speaking Orthodox Christians living in New York and reminded the guests of the words of the Imperial passion-bearer Nicholas inscribed on a Cathedral’s fresco: The building of the Cathedral in New York is a matter of national importance.

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